



BIOSECURITY:

Protecting Your Backyard Flock

The recent devastating outbreaks of **High Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)** in poultry and wild birds in the Midwest have increased the likelihood of the disease affecting flocks in the East. Biosecurity is the best means of safeguarding your birds and your farm or other premises against the virus.

The current strains of avian influenza can affect wild or domesticated birds. Most birds will die within days of exposure, although ducks and some other species can act as carriers without ever becoming sick. It is spread by contact with infected birds or items that have been exposed to infected birds or their feces. Although no humans have contracted the virus in these HPAI outbreaks, people can move the disease between flocks on their shoes, clothing, vehicles, or other equipment. Practicing biosecurity means taking the steps necessary to reduce the chances of infectious disease being carried onto or off of your farm.

The first step is to identify the ways to mitigate the greatest risks to your birds or farm from Avian Influenza.

Reduce Risks to the Flock

- Never introduce adult birds into an established flock unless they pass quarantine (30 days isolation) or are tested clean of disease. Treat birds returning from shows as if they were new to the flock.
- Do not mix different species in the same flock. Mixing species (e.g., chickens and turkeys or with waterfowl) on the same premises can be a deadly combination.
- Limit visitors from accessing your pens or coops. Do not visit other poultry facilities.
- Confine birds to a fenced area and limit contact with wild birds, mammals, and insects as much as possible.
- Do not share equipment, supplies, or vehicles with other bird owners.
- Clean and disinfect all coops, equipment, shoes, clothes, and vehicles every time, before entering poultry areas.
- Remove dirt and manure from surfaces before disinfection. "You can't clean dirt."
- Practice "all in, all out" when changing flocks. Get rid of all birds and disinfect the coop before getting any new birds.
- Check for parasites monthly and treat if necessary. Use a dusting area to prevent external parasites.
- Keep rodents, flies, dogs, and cats out of the chicken coop and feed.



Common Sense Biosecurity Measures

- Keep your birds in a safe environment
- Make sure everyone that cares for your birds understands and abides by all biosecurity plans for your flock.
- Wear separate dedicated clothing and shoes when working with your birds.
- Clean up any spilled feed and discourage wild birds from accessing feed and your bird pens.
- Never access your birds after hunting, fishing, or coming in contact with any other birds or areas that wild birds frequent.
- Never buy birds from unknown sources like auctions or other live bird markets.
- Care for and visit birds in the order of bird age— youngest first to oldest last.
- Watch for signs of infectious disease in your birds. Report sick or dead birds to 617-626-1795.
- Always care for sick pens last or, better yet, have a separate person care for sick birds.

Precautions for Free-Range Poultry

Poultry producers and backyard bird owners who raise birds in outdoor, non-confinement systems should prevent contact with wild birds, particularly waterfowl, and wild bird droppings.

- Identify high risk areas, including wetlands along migratory flyways or other areas where wild waterfowl or shorebirds congregate, and high density poultry production areas.
- Implement preventative measures for high-risk areas:
 - Keep birds indoors, as possible.
 - Restrict outside, open access by maintaining outdoor enclosures covered with solid roofs and wire mesh or netted sides.
 - Provide feed and water for all non-confinement-raised poultry in an indoor area.
 - Prevent access to outdoor creeks, ponds, or other surface water that could potentially transmit AI or other pathogens through contamination with wild bird excrement.



Don't mix your birds with other production animals!

If your flock becomes HPAI-infected, you will not be able to move milk or other agricultural products unless your birds are kept separate and you have good biosecurity practices in place.

Look for Signs of Disease

It is important to know the warning signs of diseases such as avian influenza. Birds with HPAI produce more virus over time. Early detection helps prevent the spread of disease. Look for these signs:

- Increase in unexplained deaths in your flock, with or without symptoms
- Sneezing, gasping for air, coughing, and/ or runny nose
- Watery, green diarrhea
- Lack of energy and poor appetite
- Drop in egg production or soft or thin-shelled, misshapen eggs
- Swelling around the eyes, neck, or head

If you have sick or dead birds, contact



617-626-1795

If You Suspect Avian Influenza

- **Don't wait! Call immediately.**
- Report sick or dead domesticated poultry:
- Call the Mass. Dept. of Agricultural Resources, Animal Health Division at **617-626-1795** or the USDA at **1-866-536-7593**
- Do not move any birds on or off your premises.
- As soon as possible, double-bag and refrigerate (do not freeze) dead birds. They may be needed for testing.
- USDA will pay indemnity for birds alive at the time of testing if the flock is positive for HPAI.
- If HPAI infection is confirmed or very strongly suspected, the goal is to depopulate the flock within 24 hours to help prevent the virus from spreading to other flocks or farms. Time is of the essence.

For more information, see www.mass.gov/avianinfluenza or www.healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov

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